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Enhancing Online Teaching with Easy-to-use Technologies

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Online Teaching Forum



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Creating an Animated .GIF

Purpose

Though there are many free animated graphics files available from Microsoft or on the Web, it's sometimes better to personalize your message. For example, you may want to post a temporary course banner that draws the attention of students who haven't posted yet during an online module. It might look something like this:



A static graphic might suffice to gain student attention, but an animated graphic can be better.

This technique should be used sparingly! Animations can be annoying, but that's the point here: students will look at it.

The free tool



Gifninja is a free tool you can use to create animated .gif's. Like most hosted software tools, you can log into Gifninja using a social media tool such as Facebook.

Click here to access [Gifninja](http://gifninja.com/). If the link doesn't work, copy and paste the following URL into your browser: <http://gifninja.com/>

Creating the Animation

Creating the Base Graphics

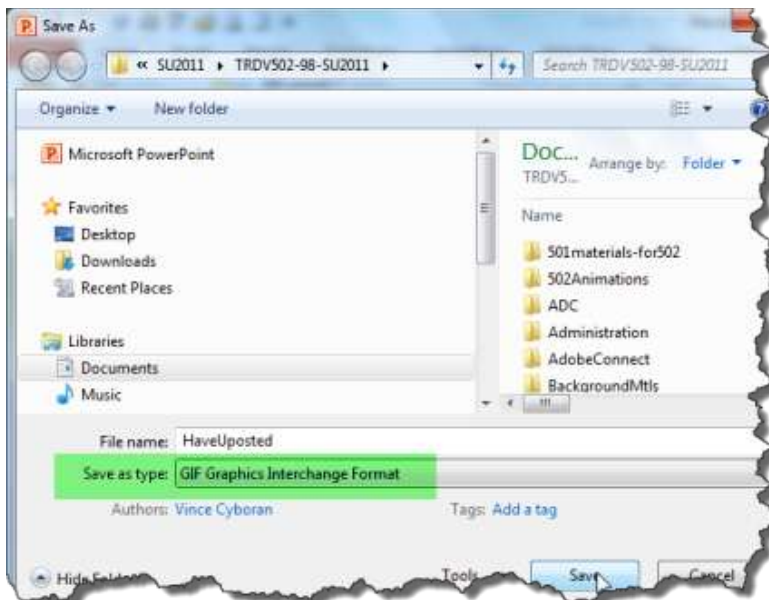
This procedure documents the steps for creating the .gif files you will upload to Gifninja to make your animated .gif. You will create one .gif file for each 'move' of the animation.

1. Create a base graphic in PowerPoint and save the PowerPoint file as a standard .ppt or .pptx file. Be sure you have only one slide in the file.



NOTE: the graphic shown contains two pieces grouped together: a Microsoft clipart figure and a cartoon bubble.

2. Save the file again as a .gif. Start by choosing File > Save As.



- Copy the original PowerPoint file, and then change the graphic. You might physically move the graphic in the direction you want it to display or you might change its size. For example, in the HaveUpsted animation, you could create three graphic files, changing the size of the animation in each: 75%, 90% and 120%. The folder in which you save the files would contain files similar to the following graphic:

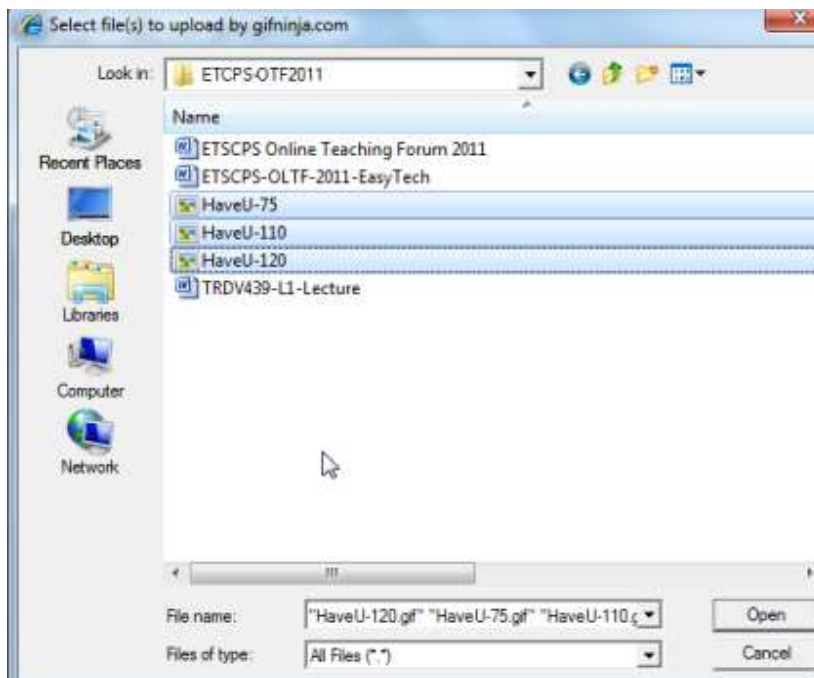
 HaveU-75	7/22/2011 10:18 AM	GIF image
 HaveU-110	7/22/2011 10:18 AM	GIF image
 HaveU-120	7/22/2011 10:19 AM	GIF image

Producing the animation in Gifninja

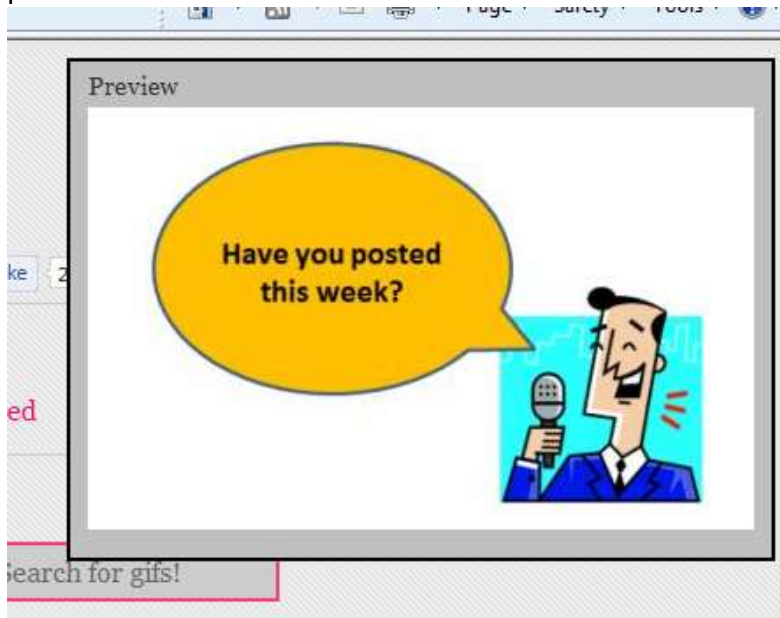
- Access Gifninja and click 'SELECT FILES.'



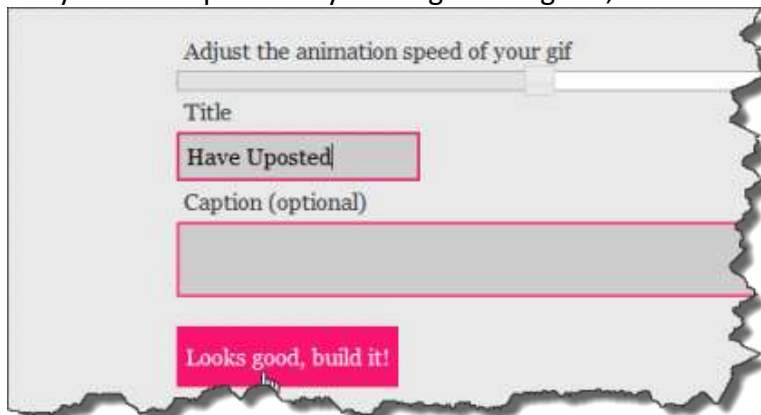
- A new window will open from which you can point to the directory/folder containing the .gif files you have previously created. Be sure to select all the files you need at one time. In this example, three files have been selected. Then click 'Open.'



3. Gifninja will display each file and allow you to change the order. It will also display a preview of the animation.




4. Okay the build process by clicking 'Looks good, build it.'



Once the animation is built, you will see a message similar to the following one, giving you both the URL of the stored .gif animation file and an option to download the file. As you want to use the file in Blackboard, you want to download it first.



Moving Beyond Emoticons

Standard emoticons, such as a smiley face can be inserted in either graphic form  or in text-symbol form: ☺. In certain areas of Blackboard, you will have to rely on character-based emoticons: :).

When replying to a posting in the discussion board forums, you can use graphics. This allows for substituting a graphic for an emoticon or text. The following sample shows an animated .gif in a reply from a student who has asked about what is coming up in a future module. The supplied answer is designed to nudge her to be more self-sufficient and to use the resources supplied to all students; the animation shows the figure checking off all four items shown, meaning, “Did you check yourself?”

Date: Sunday, October 2, 2011 6:13:32 PM CDT
Subject: Syllabus
Are we working on the syllabus together in module #3?

Hi Karen,



The answer is in the Assignments document on page 6. You'll be working in another type of group in Module 3.

Vince

PresenterMedia

For a reasonably priced subscription, you can access a library of .gif files, animated .gif files, and PowerPoint templates. That is where the animated .gif used in the prior example was obtained. Click [here](#) to access the Web site for PresenterMedia. If the link doesn't work, copy and paste the following URL into your browser: <http://www.presentermedia.com/index.php>.

The PowerPoint templates can be a good way to start a session in a classroom:

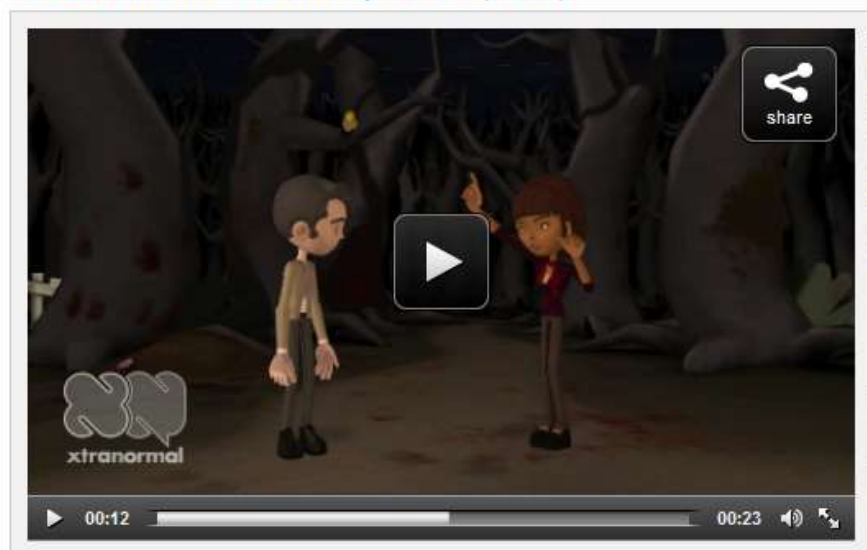


Using Cartoons to Spark Conversation

Sometimes dealing with student anxiety, such as students being very nervous about a new skill they will be acquiring in a course, can be dealt with gently using a cartoon. You can create cartoons with predefined characters using a tool such as 'xtranormal.' The tool is not free, but it is reasonably priced. Here's the [link](http://www.xtranormal.com/). If the link doesn't work, copy the following URL into your browser: <http://www.xtranormal.com/>.

In Blackboard, you can provide a static graphic of the cartoon and a link. If you place the cartoon as the last item within a folder, you can use the xtranormal player instead of a link. Following is a static graphic from a cartoon used to deal with student anxiety about producing storyboards for self-paced e-learning.

ADVENTURES IN E-LEARNING, PART 1 (DEMO)

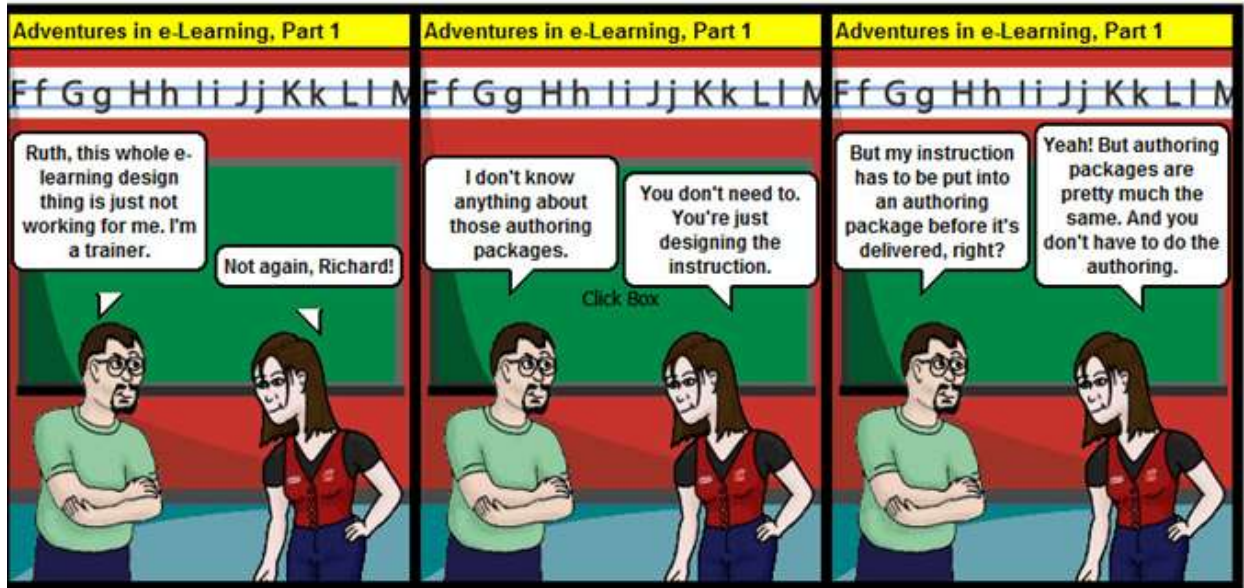


As their splash page says:



Comic strips

Comic strips can sometimes achieve the same effect as cartoons. Further, there are many free comic-strip generators available on the Web. The following graphic is from a comic strip series used to deal with the same student anxiety as dealt with using the cartoon. Students have expressed their appreciation for such techniques.



The example above was created using stripcreator.com. But, here is a [link](#) to a list of the top packages. That list has direct links to the packages. If the link doesn't work, copy and paste the following URL into your browser: <http://smashingwall.com/resources/comic-strips-websites/>.

